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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 25 March 1999, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. FULCI (Italy)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The PRESIDENT, giving a brief progress report on the work of the Council, said that it should once again have the use of its regular chamber by September. The contract for the renovation work on the chamber had been signed with the chosen contractor on Wednesday, 24 March. Four rows of tables would be added to accommodate 90 additional observer delegations. The renovations had been made possible by a substantial contribution from the Government of Italy and by the decision of the Secretariat to carry out some of the work in advance. For the chairs, which must be exact replicas of the existing ones, a donation was expected from an important American foundation. Meanwhile, the Office of the President would now be open daily.

At the current meeting, the Council would adopt a resolution on the distribution of seats on the Executive Board of the World Food Programme. The task had been complicated by the necessity of arriving at an agreement simultaneously in New York and Rome. The negotiations had been difficult, but in the end the spirit of consensus and compromise had prevailed.

All vacancies in the membership of the Council's subsidiary bodies were about to be filled for the current year. It was the first time that had happened in the history of the Council.

Since Wednesday, 24 March, the Council had had a Web page at the United Nations Web site. It could be accessed by entering the Web site and clicking on the heading "Economic and Social Development". Moreover, at the substantive session of the Council, to be held in July, all statements by representatives participating in the high-level segment would appear live on the Internet; users would be able not only to see and hear the speakers, but also to read the texts of their statements (provided the texts were supplied to the secretariat in time). That innovation would allow for instant worldwide dissemination of the Council's debates, promote greater transparency in the debates and encourage greater involvement on the part of Governments, non-governmental organizations

and civil society. The phrase, "We the peoples of the United Nations", would become more meaningful.

In preparation for the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Council in Geneva in July, the first of five preparatory panels had been held on 16 March on the theme of advancing gender equality and eradicating poverty. It had been well attended and had generated new momentum towards the goal of a Council declaration on the fight against poverty throughout the world.

The Council's relations with the international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) were developing at an unprecedented pace. The meeting with officials of the World Bank in February had been very successful. He had gone to Geneva the week before to participate in a WTO symposium on trade and development. On 29 April, the Council would be hosting the second high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions in New York and many Ministers of Finance and Development had already announced their intention of attending. In June, Council members would be going to Washington to confer with top officials at the International Monetary Fund.

In view of the recently expressed interest of the Security Council and the Secretary-General in the subject, he had in February sent a letter to the President of the Security Council regarding the implementation of Article 65 of the Charter of the United Nations (E/1999/7-S/1999/170). The first part of that Article stated: "The Economic and Social Council may furnish information to the Security Council". During the current year, the Council would for the first time brief the Security Council on the outcome of the coordination segment of the 1999 substantive session, a segment that would be devoted to the key theme of the development of Africa. With regard to the second part of the Article, which stipulated that the Economic and Social Council should "assist the Security Council upon its request", he had asked the President of the Security Council whether the invitation extended to the Economic and Social Council in Security Council resolution 1212 (1998) to contribute to the designing of a programme of support for Haiti should be interpreted as a formal request for assistance.

With regard to the coordination of the work of the functional commissions, he said that the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) had taken upon himself the burden of presiding over all meetings with the bureaux of the subsidiary bodies that would ensure continuity and consistency in efforts to

coordinate and harmonize the work of the Council. Five such meetings had been held during the past few weeks, including one between the Council and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna by means of a video conference, and other meetings were scheduled for the near future. An evaluation of all such meetings would be prepared for the substantive session of the Council.

According to the practice instituted by the previous President of the Council, Mr. Somavia (Chile), the Bureau had decided to proceed to a fair division of labour among its members. Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia) had presided over the informal consultations preceding the organizational session in February and would preside over the general segment of the substantive session. Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho) had presided over the preparatory meeting on 16 March and would preside over the operational activities segment at the substantive session. Mr. Sychov (Belarus) had presided over the informal consultations preceding the current meeting and would preside over the humanitarian affairs segment of the substantive session. Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia), in addition to presiding over the meetings with the bureaux of the functional commissions, would preside over the coordination segment of the substantive session.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL DECISION 1997/322

The Secretary-General said that the contacts with the Bretton Woods institutions scheduled for April 1999, along with his own regular consultations with the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of IMF, would further deepen the strategic partnership being built between the United Nations and those institutions, both at the policy level and on the ground, where cooperation counted most.

Preparations were already well under way towards the Council's debates at its substantive session on gender, employment and development in Africa; in particular, he welcomed the intensive preparations for the high-level segment through a series of panels on poverty eradication. The outcome of the substantive session could serve as input for the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000. It was important to take advantage of such opportunities in order to move towards a more unified United Nations response to those who looked to the Organization for help in the economic and social spheres.

The Economic and Social Council could play a pivotal role in promoting the kind of cooperation needed both within and beyond the United Nations system,

both at Headquarters and in the field. For that to happen, the private sector and civil society must become even more involved in the Council's work, and interactions between the Council and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) should be intensified in order for the United Nations system to function well. He himself was committed to making the partnership work and had taken careful note of the many suggestions on the subject made by Council members at the previous meeting.

The partnership between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council envisaged in Article 65 of the Charter had considerable potential, in particular with respect to peace-building and long-term development. To be productive, both Councils would need to take into account the specific needs of the countries concerned and define the objectives clearly.

The Economic and Social Council had recognized the need to rethink its role in order to give the world's peoples the service they expected of the United Nations. By improving working methods and bringing greater coherence to its machinery, the Council was making an important contribution to the process of United Nations reform. He therefore looked forward to hearing the views of members of the Council.

The PRESIDENT thanked the Secretary-General for his opening remarks and invited members of the Council to proceed to an exchange of views with him, in accordance with Council decision 1997/322.

Mr. HENZE (Germany) spoke on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, Cyprus and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area.

As had been stated on a number of occasions, the European Union felt that ACC and the Economic and Social Council should share more information, ideas and experience and should cooperate more closely in order to make the reforms undertaken by United Nations bodies and specialized agencies mutually supportive. The European Union would therefore like the Council to organize a briefing shortly after the next meeting of ACC in April, in order to enable it to fulfil its coordination and guidance functions more effectively within the United Nations system.

He emphasized the importance of the work programme and priorities of the Council. The Council must be able to perform the role assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations, that of coordinating the economic and social activities of the United Nations and issuing operational directives and general guidelines to its various bodies.

The European Union had always been in favour of closer cooperation and complementarity between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions in order to make their goals and development programmes as consistent as possible. The visit of the President and 21 executive directors of the World Bank to the United Nations in February 1999 had marked an important step towards the creation of an effective partnership between the United Nations and the Bank, and the Union was looking forward to the forthcoming high-level meeting between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The European Union, which had always advocated better follow-up of United Nations conferences, attached great importance to the special meeting the Council was to hold in May, on the topic of development indicators, which would permit the integrated and coordinated implementation of the programmes of action emanating from United Nations conferences.

The European Union welcomed the theme chosen for the high-level segment of the Council's substantive session, "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women". It felt that the United Nations system and the World Bank must work together on poverty eradication, which should be a key element of all development strategies. Moreover, the empowerment of women, the improvement of their social, economic and political status and rights and their full participation in decision-making were essential to poverty eradication.

Development in Africa was another important area in which United Nations bodies should coordinate and integrate their activities. The European Union welcomed the Secretary-General's emphasis on the need to ensure respect for human rights, democracy and the primacy of law throughout the African continent in order to establish a lasting peace and promote viable development in that continent. It also shared the Secretary-General's view that any strategy for sustainable growth in Africa required the active collaboration of African Governments, which must create an environment conducive to investment and growth.

The humanitarian affairs segment of the Council's substantive session, which would deal with the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, could serve to reinforce the Council's coordination function by bringing together representatives of both humanitarian and development organizations.

Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) said that, while he could not speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as he had not consulted with it, he hoped that what he said would reflect the views of that Group.

A number of international organizations were planning to adopt a poverty eradication target for the year 2015 and the Council might consider advocating such a target, which could be adopted at the Millennium Assembly. In addition, since working relations between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions were assuming great importance, the Council might perhaps invite their presidents and directors of those institutions to submit annual reports on how they were implementing General Assembly resolutions.

Since open and informal dialogue between all agents of development could help the United Nations to exert greater influence in that domain, it might be useful for the President to meet not only with the President of the Security Council, but also with the President of the General Assembly and the heads of other United Nations organizations, and for the Economic and Social Council to organize an annual meeting at which United Nations organs and organizations and the Bretton Woods institutions would be represented. The Council's Web page on the United Nations Web site was highly important as a way of extending the debate on development to civil society and enabling the Council and ACC to make development a top priority.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General intended to deepen the dialogue with the members of the Council and to contribute towards improving the working relationship between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. His delegation also hoped for regular collaboration between the Council and ACC. The process had already begun, and its most successful manifestation had been the meeting in May 1998 on the follow-up to major world conferences. Such initiatives were worth repeating, and it would be useful to organize more frequent meetings in which the members of ACC would participate.

The Council could not demand more active participation from ACC without fulfilling its own role in policy coordination. It was essential for the Secretary-General to continue his political support for the Council and to maintain a more intensive dialogue with its members. Such a dialogue would also be beneficial to the Secretariat itself.

His delegation also welcomed the President's effort to promote integrated action in the service of peace and development, as authorized by Article 65 of the Charter of the United Nations. For some years there had been talk about the need to establish a link between the political decisions of the Security Council and their implementation. The need was greater than ever, and the Economic and Social Council should address the question. It would be inaccurate to say that the Council did not deal with issues of peace and international security, when its agenda for 1999 called for it to hold debates on development in Africa and humanitarian issues.

With regard to Haiti, his delegation continued to advocate a country case approach. Some thought should be given to the question of how the Economic and Social Council would adopt its decisions and what contribution it might make to the Security Council. The Economic and Social Council could, for example, bring the decisions it had adopted during the course of the year to the attention of the Security Council. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's remarks in that regard.

Mr. SUCHARIPA (Austria) said that the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318) had been justly commended for its integrated approach to the prevention of violent conflicts and its focus on human security and sustainable development. The development of Africa would be on the agenda during the Council's coordination segment and it was a priority issue for ACC. He would welcome the Secretary-General's views on what the Council might contribute to that important issue, as well as information on what ACC was doing to follow up on it.

Mr. RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA (Cuba) said that the relations between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions, in particular the World Bank, had developed significantly. Only the United Nations could and should bring to those institutions the integrated development dimension essential to the countries of the South. With regard to the priority accorded

to the development of Africa and the eradication of poverty, the Council should consider the financial resources required for that purpose. In view of the reduction in core resources allocated to development funds and programmes, his delegation wondered what the prospects were. With regard to implementation of Article 65 of the Charter, his delegation felt that the issue needed to be examined thoroughly in all its various operational and legal aspects, particularly in relation to the functions and powers of the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Group of 77 would need to define its position on the matter. It was more important to improve the working methods of the Economic and Social Council in coordinating economic and social activities than to develop policies and programmes in areas that were not a fundamental part of its mandate.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that his report (S/1998/318) dealt not only with conflict settlement in Africa, but also with the continent's development. The African countries and the least developed countries elsewhere must be integrated into the globalization process; the recommendations in his report were directed towards that end. The Council could play a key role in mobilizing the support of the United Nations system to implement those recommendations. Discussion of the report by the Council could provide an opportunity to focus attention on African issues, to coordinate the multiplicity of international initiatives regarding that continent, and to mobilize the necessary political support. The governing bodies of all the United Nations agencies were considering the report to see what bearing the recommendations might have in their respective spheres of activity.

Mr. WINNICK (United States of America) noted that the Economic and Social Council had little by little abdicated its responsibilities to the Secretariat, particularly to ACC. He was therefore pleased to see the Council resume its functions in response to the will of the Member States. He would be interested to learn what steps had been taken to reform ACC in order to make relations between ACC and the Council more transparent.

Mr. KOLBY (Norway) said that economic globalization would require better coordination of activities within the United Nations system and a stronger partnership between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. The Council had an essential role to play in that regard; it also had a vital role in integrating gender equity into the policies and programmes

of the Organization. For the third consecutive year, the empowerment of women and gender equality were on the agenda, as essential components of poverty eradication and economic development. His delegation supported the comprehensive approach taken by the Secretary-General in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318). It was important for the international community and the countries of Africa to consider together ways of addressing those challenges in Africa, and for the Council to participate in the process. By looking more closely at the question of the transition from recovery to development during the humanitarian segment, the Council could formulate useful recommendations.

Mr. YAMAZAKI (Japan) said that his delegation favoured reinforcing the strategic partnership between the Bretton Woods institutions and the Council and fostering close collaboration between ACC and the Council. With regard to development in Africa, his country, as host of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, felt that linking the follow-up to that conference with the outcomes of other major United Nations conferences would contribute to the continent's development.

Mr. JORDÁN-PANDO (Bolivia) noted with concern that four decades of United Nations development efforts to reduce the gap between the developed and developing countries had not brought the desired results; indeed, the gap had widened even further. He wondered whether the issue, which was one of concern to the Bretton Woods institutions, would be addressed by the Millennium Assembly or discussed in depth by the Council.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL said that greater coordination was desirable between ACC and the Economic and Social Council. ACC would make more public pronouncements on important questions and its member organizations would hold more briefings during the substantive debate of the Council. Greater space should be allowed for the coordination segment, to enable the States members of the Council to consider United Nations activities in each area. The existing coordination between some Council bodies and ACC should be strengthened. It was for the members to decide whether the issues of poverty and globalization would be discussed by the Council and then to see that they were included on the agenda.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (E/1999/2, E/1999/L.10, L.11 AND L.13)

Draft decision E/1999/L.10: Working arrangements for the substantive session of 1999 of the Economic and Social Council

Mr. SYCHOV (Belarus) introduced draft decision E/1999/L.10, which had been prepared on the basis of informal consultations.

Draft decision E/1999/L.10 was adopted.

Mr. WINNICK (United States of America) welcomed the adoption of draft decision E/1999/L.10. However, he stressed the need to have the relevant documentation in advance. He suggested that the members should be informed during the resumed organizational session in May of the state of readiness of the documentation.

Draft decision E/1999/L.11: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: Reporting to the Economic and Social Council on the follow-up to the World Food Summit

Mr. SYCHOV (Belarus) introduced draft decision E/1999/L.11, which had been prepared on the basis of informal consultations.

Draft decision E/1999/L.11 was adopted.

Draft decision E/1999/L.13: Additional meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women

Mr. SYCHOV (Belarus) introduced draft decision E/1999/L.13, which had been prepared on the basis of informal consultations.

Draft decision E/1999/L.13 was adopted.

REVIEW OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (E/1999/L.12)

Draft resolution E/1999/L.12: Revision of the General Regulations of the World Food Programme

The PRESIDENT introduced draft resolution E/1999/L.12.

Draft resolution E/1999/L.12 was adopted.

The PRESIDENT recalled that the draft resolution just adopted had been the subject of long and difficult negotiations, but in the end the spirit of compromise had prevailed. He thanked all members of the Council who had participated in the informal working group created for that purpose.

Mr. RESHETNYAK (Ukraine), speaking on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, noted that more than a year had elapsed since the Council had begun implementing General Assembly resolution 50/8 on the review of the distribution of seats in the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP).

His delegation wished to thank all those who had worked for consensus, in both Rome and New York, particularly the President of the Council and the members of the working groups in New York and Rome.

The Group of Eastern European States was confident that the resolution would be adopted by the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and subsequently by the General Assembly and by the FAO Conference later in the year.

The Group was looking forward to electing one of its members to the Executive Board of WFP for a term beginning 1 January 2000 and to participating constructively in the work of that important United Nations programme.

The Group attached great importance to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 48/162 and 50/8 and considered the resolution just adopted to be only an interim measure demonstrating a willingness to compromise.

ELECTIONS, NOMINATIONS AND CONFIRMATIONS (E/1999/L.1/Add.6 AND Add.7)

Elections postponed from previous sessions

Commission on Population and Development

The PRESIDENT announced that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had endorsed the candidacies of Costa Rica and Paraguay for the vacancies to be filled from that Group for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2000.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the candidates proposed by acclamation.

It was so decided.

Costa Rica and Paraguay were elected to the Commission on Population and Development.

Commission on Science and Technology for Development

The PRESIDENT announced that the Group of Asian States had endorsed the candidacy of the Philippines for the vacancy to be filled from that Group for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2000.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the candidate proposed by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Philippines was elected a member of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.

Commission on Human Settlements

The PRESIDENT announced that the Group of African States had endorsed the candidacy of Senegal for the vacancy to be filled from that Group for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2002.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the candidate proposed by acclamation.

It was so decided.

Senegal was elected a member of the Commission on Human Settlements.

Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting

The PRESIDENT announced that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States had endorsed the candidacy of Colombia for the vacancy to be filled from that Group for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 1999.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the candidate proposed by acclamation.

It was so decided.

Colombia was elected a member of the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development

The PRESIDENT announced that the candidacy of Mr. Badr Kasme (Syrian Arab Republic) had been proposed by his Government and endorsed by the Group of Asian States for the vacancy to be filled from that Group for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 2002.

Biographical information on Dr. Kasme was to be found in the annex to document E/1999/L.1/Add.6.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the candidate proposed by acclamation.

It was so decided.

Mr. Badr Kasme was elected a member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development.

The PRESIDENT announced that Mr. Paul M. Kodzwa (Zimbabwe), who had previously been elected a member of the Committee, was unable to assume his seat. The Government of Zimbabwe had therefore nominated Mr. Christian M. Katsande to fill the vacancy thus created.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to elect the candidate proposed by acclamation.

It was so decided.

Mr. Christian M. Katsande was elected a member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development.

Nominations

The PRESIDENT announced that Portugal had been nominated by the Group of Western European and other States for the vacancy to be filled from that Group for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring on 31 December 1999.

Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Council wished to endorse the nomination of Portugal.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT thanked the chairpersons of the various regional groups. He noted with pleasure that all vacant posts had been filled and hoped that that would constitute a precedent to be followed in the elections to be held in May for the year 2000.

The meeting rose at noon.